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With the Living Lincoln

by Mitchell Mannering

HOW eagerly we sit and listen to stories of Lincoln from the lips of those who knew him in the flesh, a privilege which alas will soon be gone forever. During the war there were few young officers more closely associated with Lincoln than General Daniel E. Sickles, and it was a rare privilege to hear the venerable officer talk of the old days of companionship with the immortal Lincoln. Early in the war General Sickles raised five regiments of infantry and was the youngest corps commander at Gettysburg, where he lost his leg.

"After my wound at Gettysburg," says the General, "I was carried on a stretcher by soldiers to Washington. Soon President Lincoln came to see me. After he had given touching expressions of his sympathy, we talked about the battle. Then, in answer to my question if he had not been anxious about the result of the battle, the President replied, 'Yes, some precautions were taken, but for my part, I was sure of our success at Gettysburg.'

" 'Why were you so confident?' I asked.

"There was a brief pause; the President seemed in deep thought. His pale face lighted up with an expression I had not observed before.

"Turning to me he said, 'When Lee crossed the Potomac and entered Pennsylvania, followed by our army, I felt that the crisis had come. I knew that defeat in a great battle on northern soil involved the loss of Washington, to be followed perhaps by the intervention of England and France in favor of the Southern Confederacy. I went to my room and got down on my knees in prayer. Never before had I prayed with so much earnestness—I wish I could repeat my prayer.

" 'I felt that I must put all my trust in the Almighty God; He gave our people the best country ever given to man; He alone could save it from destruction. I had tried my best to do my duty and had found myself unequal to the task. The burden was more than I could bear. God had often been our Protector in other days. I prayed that He would not let the nation perish. I asked Him to help us and give us victory now. I was sure my prayer was answered:

" 'I knew that God was on our side;—I had no misgivings about the result at Gettysburg.'

"Rising from his seat Mr. Lincoln took my hand and said with tenderness, 'Sickles, I am told, as you have been told perhaps, that your condition is serious. I am in a prophetic mood today. You will get well.' "

And "get well" he did; in just thirteen days the hero of the second day's fight at Gettysburg, legless, but still undaunted, presented himself to the President at the White House.

He was at once appointed on Lincoln's staff and served for two and a half years, being sent on special duty to all parts of the country. When Lincoln began to consider the nomination for a second term, he looked about for an associate on the ticket, and decided that one from a border state would be expedient.

Andrew Johnson was well known for his violent opposition to traitors, so one day, calling in General Sickles, the President said, "Sickles, I have an important mission for you. I want you to go to Tennessee and tame Governor Johnson. I want him for a running mate if he can be brought into the right frame of mind. I will appoint you to inspect government property at Nashville, but your real business will be to tame Johnson."

General Sickles went to Nashville and found Governor Johnson enforcing the most rigorous measures against declared Confederates. Soon after his arrival General Sickles met Mrs. Saunders Brown, a daughter of a former governor of the state, and whose husband had been a mem-

ber of President Buchanan's cabinet, one of the wealthiest women of Tennessee and an old friend of General Sickles. With true Southern hospitality she invited him to her country home and drove him out one afternoon in her landau. In the evening he was entertained by the daughter of Mrs. Brown, and he spent delightful hours listening to the songs of the South. When about to retire, however, he found they had played a trick on him, the bedclothes were sewed together, and the Northern guest realized that all was not as peaceful and amicable as it might seem. Nothing daunted, however, General Sickles ripped the clothes open and crawled in. He declares that he slept well, in the bargain.

When the General called on Governor Johnson soon after, he was received rather coolly. Asking the Governor if he had offended in any way he replied, "Yes, I will have nothing to do with you, sir," he declared, "if you associate with those d——d rebel women," and the General knew he meant it.

It was said of Andrew Johnson that he had never looked upon the face of a man he feared, and the declaration might well have given alarm to the Northerner. But Sickles kept up his friendship with Mrs. Brown and incidentally made it his business to convince her that unless she would take the oath of allegiance, all her property would probably be confiscated by Governor Johnson. He also advised her to act quickly, and yielding to his persuasion Mrs. Brown took the oath of allegiance. General Sickles then called the attention of Governor Johnson to the records. The irascible Tennessean could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the signature of Mrs. Brown and realized that she had pledged her fealty to the United

Soon President Lincoln came to see me

States. Turning to Sickles he said, "Well, I will concede that molasses does more than vinegar. You have performed a miracle and done a great service for the Union. Now tell me what I can do." From that moment the "taming" of Andrew Johnson was accomplished.

President Lincoln when informed of the success of General Sickles was greatly pleased, and a better understanding between the administration and Andrew Johnson resulted in his nomination and election to the Vice-Presidency.

It is an epoch in one's life to hear him describe the strenuous days when Stanton was tearing up the orders of the President and Salmon P. Chase was plotting for the nomination to the Presidency, while amid all that seething caldron of political intrigue the patient but sagacious Lincoln pushed steadily forward to the goal to save the Union at all costs.

As the years pass men realize more and more how Lincoln's strong personality became a constant and living force in the very hearts of his people. His strong characteristics, his loving helpfulness, his kindness and gentleness, his simple dignity, devoid of ostentation of power or authority, made him beloved and trusted to such an extent that it is doubtful if there ever was a leader with such power over his people and so able to cope with and use his very enemies and adversaries to advantage, because of the ever-present love and simplicity of his great heart. The years which are so rapidly removing the great and active participants in the Civil War are bringing to the surface more of these precious recollections and traditions of the beloved Lincoln, and it was inspiring to hear from the lips of General Sickles a new story in which he proved that although called a "man's man," Lincoln was also beloved of the American women as well.

During the darkest period of the war, when President Lincoln made a visit to the army he was very much discouraged and downcast, and General Sickles determined to cheer him up by giving him a hearty welcome. The General tells the story himself in his own inimitable way, and he even has the grace to blush after its recital. He began operations by ordering his men to decorate their camps and form arches with the surrounding trees, making the company streets vistas of white tents peering through avenues of long-leaved pines. As the President drove down the line the boys began cheering, throwing up their hats and in every way displaying cheerful and loyal devotion, coming up to him on horseback and grasping his hand.

The tribute affected Lincoln greatly, and the tears were streaming down his cheeks as he reached the General's headquarters. The great and enthusiastic demonstration of loyalty and affection by the men who were facing the bullets and taking their lives in their hands touched him deeply.

But the greetings were not over. The gallant Sickles had invited many ladies, wives of officers visiting in camp, and including some who were prominent in the diplomatic corps at Washington, to assemble at his headquarters to meet the President. As Lincoln reached them, one of the ladies, a leader in Washington society, caught the lapel of his coat as if about to whisper something in his ear, and gave him a hearty smack on the lips. This was the signal for the other ladies to follow suit, and another means of expressing that the devotion of the men was fully equalled by that of the American women. Not only the hearts of the men but also of the loyal women went out to the great, gaunt, heartsick Lincoln riding slowly along his embattled myriads, his face saddened by the recent and horrible carnage of indecisive battlefield.

But General Sickles declares that the President really smiled that day, and that the tears he shed were those of gratitude and thanksgiving toward the devoted and loyal soldiers.